

Marjory Kinnon School Complaints Procedure: Parents/Professionals

A complaint can be defined as ‘any dissatisfaction with the service provided by the school’.

Stage 1 – Complaint at School Level

It would normally be expected for a parent or other person making a complaint to approach the school in the first instance.

- Many of the complaints are “informal”, and parents are encouraged to raise these with teaching staff at classroom level in the first instance, and then with the Deputy Head Teacher if it is not resolved
- If the parent or person feels that the complaint should be taken further, then the complaint should be set out in writing to the Head teacher.
- A written complaint to the Head teacher will be acknowledged within seven working days of receipt.
- The Headteacher will report back as applicable on the outcome of the complaint.
- If the parent or other person still feels dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to stage two.
- A complaint’s book will be kept showing the date of any complaint made to the Head Teacher, details of the complaint, action taken and the outcome. A summary of this information will be included in the Head teacher’s termly report to the Governing Body.

Stage 2 – Complaint to Chair of Governors.

When it is not possible to resolve the complaint at stage 1, the next stage would be for the complainant to direct their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors if they wish to pursue it further. The Chair of Governors can investigate the complaint themselves or request the services of the LA either, to investigate the complaint, or to mediate between the school and the complainant. The results of the investigation at Stage 1 and any necessary action taken would be made available to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the complaint and will carry out an investigation. The Chair of Governors having completed the investigation will inform the complainant when the investigation has been completed if any further action is recommended. An independent person to note take and make record of discussion.

It is very important at this stage that the complaint is not discussed (even in outline) by the Governing Body as a whole as it will not then be possible for Stage 3 to take place.

Sometimes, a complainant will simultaneously direct their complaint to the Chair of Governors and the LA. In these circumstances, the complainant will be advised by the Chair of Governors who will investigate the complaint.

Stage 3 – Formal Governing Body Complaints Procedure

If the complainant were still not satisfied, he or she would be asked to put the complaint in writing formally to the Governing Body for consideration by a complaints panel. At this stage the complaint may well be different from the original complaint lodged, as it would include dissatisfaction with the action taken by the school management to resolve the original complaint.

It is necessary to guard against any possibility of conflict in the appeals panel. Governors who have previously been involved in the complaint, who know the complainant personally or have any other interest in the complaint should not participate in the complaints panel. Also, as complaints concern the management of the school or issues of classroom management, it would not normally be appropriate for staff governors to be panel members. The complaints panel will comprise three governors, and will be delegated the power to make a final decision on the complaint on behalf of the whole Governing Body. The complaints panel would meet within twenty one days of receiving a complaint.

The panel would receive written evidence from the complainant on the complaint and from the Head teacher on what action has been taken to resolve the complaint. Any written evidence will be circulated to all parties before the hearing. The Clerk would take minutes of the panel meeting. It may well be that the outcome of any investigation by the LA will be submitted as part of the evidence either by the Head teacher or by the complainant. The panel would hear evidence from witnesses from both sides relating specifically to the complaint and the action taken. The panel will be able to question the complainant, the Head teacher (both of whom would be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague who can speak on their behalf if necessary) and the witnesses. The Head teacher and the complainant can also question each other and the witnesses. The procedure for a complaints panel is set out below:

- Introductions by the Chair of the Panel, who will be the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body wherever possible.
- Complainant makes statement of complaint and background.
- Questions to complainant by panel and Head teacher
- All parties hear and question witnesses called by complainant.
- Head teacher makes statement.
- Questions to Head teacher by panel and complainant.
- All parties hear and question witnesses called by Head teacher.
- Head teacher makes final statement.
- Panel considers case in question and reaches decision on whether the complaint is upheld and may call for certain action to be taken by the school.
- Wherever possible, all parties will be informed of the panel's decision on the next working day.

Once this decision is reached it is final. The only other recourse there is to the complainant is generally to the Secretary of State for Education, on the grounds that the Governing Body has not discharged their duty properly.

This policy was reviewed by Governors Strategic, Planning and Resources committee: Feb 2016